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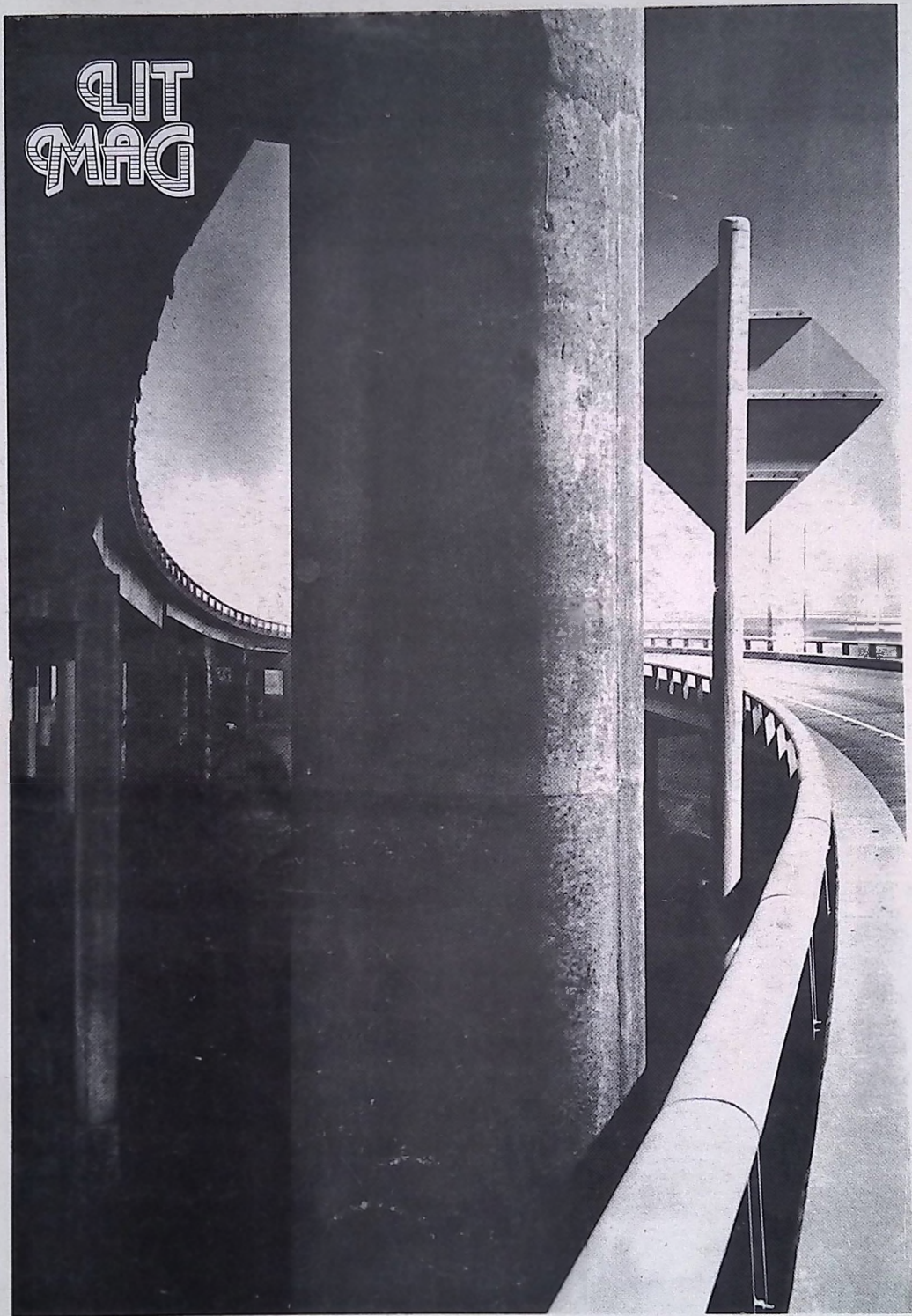
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QIT
MAG



WINTER, 1984

We, the editorial staff, are proud to present the second issue of Litmag as a showcase for the fine literary and artistic talent on this campus.

Submissions were solicited from the student body. They were judged using a double-blind technique to eliminate personal bias and insure fairness.

The overall quality of the material we received was very high -- we only regret that we didn't have the space to include more of it.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to the English Department Faculty for their much-needed support, and to Bob Jorgenson of Beacon Paper Company, Cletus Gribble of Gribble Printing and Beverly Swanson of Swanson and Associates Advertising for their generous donation of time and resources.

But mostly, we thank all of you who submitted your work, which made this magazine possible, and all of you readers, without whom Litmag would not exist.

Thank you, and enjoy,

Susan P. Adrian, Editor

Cover Photograph by Paul R. Wilson



by Paula Pfitzer

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Tides on the Real Earth

Tides, the periodic rise and fall of the oceans, are the most predictable of motions, yet many aspects of the tides are not fully understood.

Elements of Oceanography

You are beached.
How long has it been this way for you?
You could not master the killing instinct
I remember now, I didn't learn it from you,
Yet I am here, I have mastered the technique
You only hoped could be yours.
Yes, you are gentle, but everyone needs teeth.
Nature provided for your need,
It gave you a different tack.
Even the shark is pitied
Hanging gasp-gilled
For the curious to see.
You are a killer whale.
I hear your whale songs in the night
Your killer whale heart has teeth
That sink very deep.
It's a pity, a pity.
When you move in for the kill
Don't forget your baby.
Remember I swim the same waters
Don't hurt me
Don't hurt me.

The waves move gently now
Your song fades away
Tides clean the beach
The killing is over.

I check the light under the
Bathroom door.
Beware of sharp teeth.

by Al Fialka

THE FIRST SATURDAY IN AUGUST

"Have a nice day"

Regina (who used to be Richard)
waddles out the door to dazzling
sunshine - one slipper is loose
flap flop it
slaps in time to her
rolls of fat jiggling--John

shaking,
coins roll over the counter like
his eyes
rolling in their sockets
glue-dead brain clicks
"Have a nice day." Whew! open
the door!--here
comes Mr.
(please take a bath)--his
clothes flap like a scarecrow is he dead
already? "Have a nice day"--The

door opens with
a blast
of hot air and sucks in
noisy, dirty kids with
sticky pennies--count 200
licorice sticks, 300 tootsie rolls and
32 pieces of bubble-
gum "Have
a nice day"--"HI!

MR. FRISK HOW ARE YOU--YES
I'M SORRY
YOUR WIFE IS GONE--YOUR TELEPHONE BILL--YES
NOW PUT IT IN THE
MAILBOX! MAILBOX!" "HAVE A NICE
DAY"--1958

pickup, rust colored-rust
covered framed by the plate
glass window
leans drunkenly on the right front flat tire--
totally wasted--she
drove on the rim. "Can
I use your phone?" "Sure
and Have a nice day"--"Please

sir, go outside and
sing" (and
breathe-beer fumes make me sick) "Yes
the other patrons
like
your show--but we
can't afford live entertainment, so
go outside."
"It's a nice day"

by Katrina Darnall

IN THE BACKYARD OF MY CHILDHOOD



In the backyard of my childhood in a space remembered large and lush with scents that now I can give a name to I rolled through grass and days cradling bouquets of lilacs to budding breasts. In mowed clover I would sit sipping honeysuckle stems spitting out nectar onto the backs of a ladybug family I was building a twig house for. In reflection of a garage windowpane I wove peony blossoms into long braided hair. I was the garden goddess of daylight dreams in Grandma's all-cotton gowns waltzing through this privileged place telling boys next door not to step across the crack of sidewalk that divided my palace from their humble home. Lying on my tummy under tipped-over lawn chairs I held court with babies who could crawl and dogs out on the roam. Ambrosia of peanut-butter, grape jam on Wonder white was shared with Blue-jays that like my crust and later dive-bombed my cat. I rejoiced over Mama's new dryer but only for the box which I lived in one whole week as a new settler near Plymouth Rock with my nearest neighbor a hundred miles away or more. After supper and before the baths everyone that I loved and hated would gather to break my arms in red rover and to catch my breath with tag. Bouncing balls were tossed Annie-Annie up and over rooftops and sometimes they never did come down.

The cherry tree was climbed; thick sap clinging to my knees so that I could try to lick the cream off the clouds and escape the porch that needed to be swept.

Nancy Drew was just a friend that never spent the night. The old quilt was my gym and I would strut in silky swimwear to the center of the yard and spread my legs far apart lifting my head right up to God and then the slow bow backwards to the ground with my cheeks filling red with blood and pride as I mastered a back flip just like my cousin Sharolyn the Cheerleader. Once she cried with me in the animal cemetery on the side of the porch where I shoveled away peat moss and gave a dignified service for robin's fresh from the egg and the kittens old Tom was jealous of. My will might still be there in the backyard of my childhood dreams. There behind the one loose brick three paces from the fireplace wall right at the level of my nose and written in the legalese Perry Mason taught me. I gave away my china piggy bank, half-interest in Winky the cat and my cutting rights to all the bushes in the Spring.

by Jeanne Kerans

Not Always Alleluia

Sometimes prayer is like:
Waiting to have your teeth pulled
Talking on the phone
With a deaf person
Trying to ski uphill
Driving on the highway
When the trucks splash
Mud on your windshield
Drying tears with sandpaper
Sometimes it's like falling
From a plane with no parachute
And you hit the birds
On the way down.

by Michael Klein



Advice to Future Astronauts

Strapped inside your tinfoil wings
Be careful. Like wax, they will melt
In the bright on dark world behind the sun,
Where a million eyes will watch your fall.

Then as you come among the stars
(of history and of sky)
Remember humbly when you raced to the crest
of a slope that left you breathing hard and
whispered "Star light, star bright..."
As the bowl of the sky lit up, think-
Are you more afraid
Now that the wish has come true?

by Carrie Phinney

STARLIGHT ABACUS

Golden spaniel floats through
the linear web of limbs
and melts upon the wall
in a Saturday night place
where coronets of braids
nod up and down
on black girls playing pinball
like the blazing eyes of toy dogs
saying "yes" from rear windows of cars.

by Tamera Walker Fox

The Fat Man of Legend

In the center of the picture stands George
Between all of us, between ourselves
And each other, the blur connecting us together.
George the faithless, George the heretic,
George the devout, the Fat Man that only each
Of us understood alone in private moments
George then is clearly the key to the story

Because we were all looking after ourselves
And we all enjoyed being together but our minds
Were filled with the thought of what we were
Going to do when we got out, Broke the barrier
Lifted the stakes and rolled the blankets
Into a roll and put them in the wagon to go.

The wagon, the green Chevy Wagon George drove
Us in Everywhere. We went all places in this car.
The car must clearly be part of the story.
The ashtrays overflowing Vantage butts on the floor
And once in awhile--was I smoking then?
I can't remember. The heavy backhand swing of
George's when he used to pop us on the side of
The head, then look back at the road. George
Is clearly the center of the story,

All parts play against and toward the center.
Late at night, Scott and I are sleeping on the floor
In George's room, on sofa cushions, and George is
Hanging off the end of the bed, cigareete dangling,
He carries the fat well, even lying down looks graceful.
He turns the pages of my notebook, what he hasn't
Read yet and the praise will come. I just can't express
Myself, he says, the smoke rises up, Someday I'm
Gonna sit down and work on it. I could do it but I
Just don't have the time.

Scott is the doomsayer, staring into space, saving it up.
He knew we were all going to die, had it
On excellent authority. Scott is there on the left
Of the picture. He and I are on slightly opposite edges
Inside the frame. George is there in the middle.
We listen to him at night and hope he never has the time
To do these things. George, we know, can blow us away.
From across the room, Scott gives me this look.

by Teddy Ficklen

On Wings of Song

On wings of song
we reached the mountainside
where all of our ambitions lay.
With one single cry of exaltation,
machine guns raised
high above a thousand heads,
we soared to the top
of the mountain,
Waving our shining triumph
over the destruction of an enemy
we knew so little about.
Driven by a black-hearted vengeance,
each of us plundered and burned
the weak foundations
of their tiny villages.
With bodies heated
by the crazed lust of victory,
we planted yet another seed
of terrible destruction
in the wombs of their women and daughters.
Racing ahead of ourselves
in the drunken splendor of war,
each man paused silently
for a moment to glance back
at the ashes of a city,
existing only within
a fleeting passage of memory.
Then on wings of song
we flew down our mountain;
suddenly burdened
by machine guns
that weighed heavily
against a thousand hearts.
by Colleen McFarland

artfully arranged

When roses come on Valentine's Day,
I smile and arrange them in
a crystal vase,
to grace a buffet that belongs in a museum
(not a dining room)
in a house so expensively offensive
that friends no longer call.

I touch the velvet petals
and think how apt of you
to send me objects
that hide their death in lies of life;
like this house,
like our smiles,
like us.

by Tamera Walker Fox

SPLINTERING

I was late to class today
because of being in the bathroom
regaining my composure
after having been raped
again
and again
and again
and again and
forever
all day, everyday
for all my life and yet
I have survived
gone on with the dailies
pretending none of it ever happened
happens still

so I put on my bitch hat
my leave me the hell alone cap
and go about my days protected
seemingly
and only ever so slowly
let you in

by K. B.

Jamaica

Jamaica heard the call from me.
I tried to reach her
through all the thick, broken wires.
I sent a telegram.
It was returned, saying
she didn't exist anymore.
I remembered her dark waters
where eternity passed
through my eyes
like specks of wisdom.
The message left me shattered
into a numberless void of questions.
I called her name once more
to make sure I wasn't dreaming.
The only answer I heard
was of my own heart
pounding echoes through
my blood
until it ran cold.

by Colleen McFarland

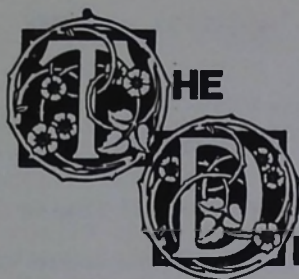
IN THE HILLS ABOVE ATHENS, AUGUST 1958

She was like a big ripe fruit
Soft standing in the doorway,
Leaning on the jamb, she said
"This is just a goof,
Don't worry about it.

We will have to kill this thing in one shot,"
She said, "Does this bother you?"
I was more or less unable to answer.
You could have just fallen in love with this woman,
At will become a good tough poet and her
Short hair bristled blonde over the hood
Of her sweatshirt. "You don't do this much, do you?"
The shy teeth of her smile and her hair that just
Noticed the sun. We were pagans

When we kissed
And when the oceans steamed at midday with the heat
We stood aside to watch them and applaud.
Her tobacco in my mouth and the smoke
That rose there with the steam in the harbor.

by Teddy Ficklen



by Jennifer Selesnick

It was raining, I remember, the day we went to see the house. A gentle drizzle clad the garden in shades of grey. I was entranced, then, by the gigantic, old rose bushes, their trunks like those of small trees, and by the willow dripping its long branches against an upstairs window. We were excited, Edward and I, standing on the doorstep under a mass of twining, purple clematis. I was filled with anticipation as we waited for the door to open and my memory slipped back over the telephone conversation with the house agent in Oxford.

"Mrs Elliott," he had said, "we have just got a new rental come in. A beautiful old house, very spacious, five bedrooms, suite you to a T. The people in there are Canadians. They want to take their son back to Canada quickly. He's not been well. I believe you could move in by the end of the week."

I felt optimistic standing on the doorstep watching the welcome rain. Perhaps the drought had broken at last. The door was opened by a small girl who ushered us into the living room to meet her mother. "How lucky I am," I thought looking around. The room was shabby but comfortable. The old cretone-covered chairs sank under our weight, a large bowl of roses stood on a table, and a wood fire had been lit against the chill of the day. The Canadian woman was distraught. Her son had fallen from an upstairs window, she told us. We looked at him as she spoke. He lay on the sofa covered by a tartan blanket, a plaster-covered leg sticking out at an angle. His face was white, his expression set. He appeared not to hear his mother.

"He's lucky to be alive," she said. "He nearly bled to death. It was such a nasty, nasty fall. Poor boy--such a horrid shock!" She squeezed his shoulder as she continued, "I suffer too--my nerves are a wreck. All I can think of is to get back home to my own people. The agent told you?" She lowered her voice: "He's not recovering as he should. The doctor says not to worry but...My Ellie will show you round. Won't you, poppet? Help out your poor old mother, there's a good girl."

The little girl rose from her place by the fire and led us round the house running nimbly before us, throwing open doors, practicing her dancing steps, pirouetting for our admiration. "This is the room where it happened," she said at last. "This is the window from which Dwight fell."

The window looked out onto the willow tree. The rain was clearing, and through the branches we could make out the shape of distant hills. "Those are the Downs," said Ellie. "You can see the White Horse of Uffington on a better day."

"The tree is very near the window," I said. In fact, the branches were touching the glass.

"I think Dwight was trying to climb into the tree," Ellie said, "but I don't know. He's never talked at all since he fell. He is absolutely and completely silent." She opened her eyes wide and became silent herself as she led us down the stairs to the living room.

We moved in a week later. The children raced around the garden. They were glad to have some space after the cramped lodgings to which we had been confined. The sun shone on the garden. The rain had not lasted. I picked roses to replenish the bowl in the sitting room. They smelt delightful but the

thorns tore at my hands. "I've never seen roses with thorns like these," I remember I said to the gardener.

"They be old roses," he said. "Nowadays they breed 'em tamer. I be tending them roses all my life and my father before me too. Aye--they have wicked thorns. You be careful lady, be sure you treat them right."

I looked at the roses. The thorns were like claws. I went inside and put ointment on my scratches.

"Be careful of the rose bushes," I said to the children. "They have very pokey thorns."

I had decided to use the room that Dwight had fallen from as a studio. I carried my canvases and paints up there and sat by the window thinking of Dwight. The willow tree was so very near. I could see how he might have been tempted to climb out into the branches. Beyond, the White Horse of Uffington was clearly visible that hot, dry day. The chalk of the Berkshire Downs shone where the grass had been cut away to form the body of the horse. It was a strange, almost cat-like creature that the ancient Celts had carved out of the hillside so long ago. I had decided to paint the view from the window. I squeezed out the little globules of paint, working through blue and yellow to red.

At the end of the first week Edward's parents came down for the day. They drove down from London for lunch and tea. "What a strange choice of house!" Edward's mother said. "It's so shabby and so damp--look you can see the mildew on the walls. All the paint is peeling. I can't think what you were thinking of, Edward dear."

"Oh, Mother!" said Edward. "You have no sense of romance. It's a beautiful house. And it can hardly be damp in this weather. Nothing is damp this year. We hear of nothing but the drought."

"You just wait for the winter," said his mother. "It won't be summer always--you'll see." She thumped her stick on the ground.

"Oh! Come on, Mother," he said. "We'll have tea under the willow tree and even your practical heart will be softened."

We moved the picnic table under the willow tree and covered it with a white cloth. We brought out the best china. Edward's mother remained unappeased.

"It's like sitting inside a cave of hair," she said. "It gives me the creeps."

The garden hummed gently around us. The afternoon sun striped the grass. The White Horse danced on the distant hill. I looked out through the leaves at the children playing "Snap" in the shade by the roses.

"How can it give you the creeps?" I asked Edward's mother. "It's so quiet here."

"I know you think I'm a stupid old woman," she said, "but I really don't like these quiet places. I'd rather live somewhere with a bit more life. And to think of that poor little boy falling from that window!" She looked up at the studio window. I looked up too. A sudden puff of wind stirred the willow branches in the still dry evening. "I have to get out of this tree," said Edward's mother. "It's too hot. The branches are stifling me." She gave a savage swipe at them with her stick, lost her balance and fell. Edward and his father rushed to pick her up.

"Are you all right?" asked Edward picking up her stick. "Come, let me help you inside. I'll get you a little whiskey--it will help to settle your nerves. I hope you are not too bruised."

"I've cut myself," she said. "Damned tree!"

The days went by. The sun continued to shine ceaselessly, day after day. The garden grew more parched. The rose bushes became hooks of fury. Only the ornamental thistles survived in the herbacious border.

"What can we do?" I asked the gardener. "It's so dry."

"Aye," he said, "they're thirsty." He looked at the yellowing leaves of the plants around us. "They're thirsty and they're hungry."

I stared at the White Horse on the green hill and at the green leaves of the willow tree in the yellow-dry garden.

"Why are the willow's leaves still so green?" I felt very faint, gasping for air.

"It's roots search out moisture," said the gardener. "Better go inside, lady. Maybe the heat is getting to you."

I felt lethargic and dispirited in the days that followed. I scratched out my painting of the White Horse--something about it constantly eluded my grasp. I remember how irritable I became, how I scolded the children and snapped at Edward. How brown it was! How dusty the garden!

"Mrs Belcher told me to tell you that she'd be counting on seeing you," said the gardener.

"The agent mentioned Mrs. Belcher," I said, "But I didn't think at the time that I needed any help in the house."

"Mrs Belcher's always worked here," he said. "She worked for those Canadian people. You should get Mrs. Belcher." His nut-like face cracked open, split in a toothless grin. "You're looking poorly."

I went inside to find Edward. I sat in the cool, dark house. "I really don't like the gardener," I said. "I think he's sinister."

"Nonsense, dear," said Edward. "Imagination! He's just an old countryman, a local yokel."

"He told me that Mrs. Belcher--the cleaning woman--is expecting us to contact her. I'm not sure that I want to."

"I think you should, dear," said Edward. "I've been meaning to suggest it. You've been so tired lately."

"Cross," I said.

"It would give you more time to paint."

"I don't want to paint," I said. "Everytime I paint I have to look at that White Horse." I burst into tears.

"Calm down, dear, said Edward.

We went the next day, Edward and I, to call on Mrs. Belcher. Beyond the picture postcard facade, beyond the Norman church and the thatched cottages, the council houses stood siege. Mrs. Belcher greeted us in her doorway, and apron stretched around her ample form.

"I was hoping you'd come," she said. "George, the gardener, told me he spoke to you. Said you were feelin a bit poorly, Ma'am."

"I think it's the heat," I said.

"Never mind, Ma'am. You take it easy. I know that house well, been keeping that house clean since I was a little girl back in the time when the Alcotts lived ther. They planted that willow tree when the old lady died, old Mrs. Alcott. She used to like to sit in that spot, had an old wooden bench out there. She told me she liked to look at the sunlight on the Downs and see the White Horse 'dancing.' Fanciful she was, but a lovely gardener. "Plants respond to good treatment! she used to say to me: 'These roses I understand them and they understand me.' Really, they used to bloom like no other roses in the village. But they're feeling the drought now, George tells me. Scratched you did they?"

"I have trouble avoiding the thorns."

"Leave them to George, Ma'am. He knows how to treat them."

Mrs Belcher came on her bicycle three times a week to clean the house. It glowed and purred under her care like a well-fed cat. I sat in my studio room unable to paint.

Autumn arrived with sharp whistling winds that rattled the window panes and found the cracks. Edward's mother was right. The house was hard to heat, although Mrs. Belcher did her best with huge rustling log fires. The wind did not break the drought.

"When will it rain?" I said to Edward. "When will it rain?"

"Soon dear," he said.

The dry stalks of dead thistles clicked in the wind. The naked rose bushes gestured in defeat. The leaves of the willow were turning yellow now and falling fast. One afternoon, surveying the scene from my window, I leaned out to greet Mrs. Belcher and George in the garden below. On the distant hill I saw the White Horse nod its head. The tree reached in, the branches grabbed me, dropped me. I felt the quick rush and thud of the hard earth and a sharp pain as something pierced my side. I saw my blood gush out and sink into the thirsty ground.

I awoke to feel Mrs. Belcher lifting my head and to see George standing over me. "That's enough now," he said. Then Edward came, and the children.

Now I lie on the sofa. I watch the rain outside. The raindrops slide down the window pane. We're leaving soon. Edward is waiting to show the new tenants around the house.

Bethlehem Beach

I was walking along the beach with Emily Dickinson
The sun was going down. The sunset was a standard image
To which we lifted eyes in praise.
There was a piano somewhere in the background
At a cafe on the pier. But there was no pier.
The beach was a rocky New Hampshire
But the pier stood out beyond the sand at Wrightsville
North Carolina. The piano came from still another place
And Emily Dickinson is dead.

I said to her something as we tread our footprints,
About Odysseus and the women he knew, the memories
He carried like a radio, tales he could pop from his pocket
Like to offer you a cigarette, he could tell about
The Sirens. He'd heard this song wailing out the jaws
Of death and could repeat it whistling at will.
Our songs, I said to Emily, our dreams are only dreams;
I hear Bill Evans playing at a place he never played.
I know this didn't happen but I wanted to be there anyway
To hear that Satin Doll creep slowly like a siren
Through an audience of waxed ears. But I can't make it
Happen. Bill Evans is dead.

And Emily, you might as well be the Jewish girl I knew
In ninth grade, with your hair straightened and pulled back.
But your name was Rothstein then.
O Emily, speak like no one and tell me something.
And Emily looked at me with blue spark eyes
Like the iris rim around a dynamo crackling
In the moonlight and said, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

by Teddy Ficklen

OFF DUTY

At 7:30

a.m.

you come home
and tell me
about a 15 year
old girl
beaten, raped
and given an overdose by her pimp
in such a calm manner.
Then you say
"She was so scared..."
and
hold your head in your hands
for a moment
before you go to bed
and fall asleep.

by Lisa Lawson

them snows

Them snows, them snows
them's wet, them's cold.
Clings on them trees
Clogs up them roads,
Smothers that grass
and chokes those rose.

by D. Earsom

Train in Fog

I stood and watched a train in fog
Pass by on a lattice work tressle.
Brass underpinnings belched bass notes
Of a Gershwin tune --
Torch songs on a grey night.
A rhapsody of rhythm
Changed the mood --
Rumblings of iron
And red lights.

by Al Fialka



unting for a poem

I put on my hunting clothers--
Orange vest
Blue jeans
Plaid shirt
Green cap
Purple beads

I bought a gun
With a waxed wood butt
Shiny barrell
I released the safety catch
Got ready
Poised to
Stalk the city woods and neighborhoods

I lumbered into Carnegie's
I heard they had memories there
and I could use a beer.
I set my site in the place
That used to be a library
Where I checked out books
As a child.
I wanted words
Any words--
Thoughts
Any thoughts.
Nothing came out
Not even a teasing idea.

I put the gun down
And drank some beer.
I had to go to the john
So I took the gun with me
Just in case--

There in the stall
I looked for writing on the wall.
No writing
No connections
Suddenly, just when I had given up
A memory came out of the oak woodwork
And stood there silently
In an inviting way
Like a deer.

It rested its chin
On the low hung louvered doors
And looked at me
As much as I wanted it
For my collection
I couldn't pull the trigger.
I simply wasn't ready.

by June Mauritzen



A Dreamer, His Beloved, and the Norse Revival

In a hollow log buried 10 feet underground a dreamer sleeps
He dreams of pink heather-covered hills and fiery purple skies
His beloved Hildagard killed him with her iron broadsword
Like a pheasant on a spit she impaled him

He dreams of pink heather-covered hills and fiery purple skies
Hildagard was a Shieldmaiden
Like a pheasant on a spit she impaled him
The Society for Creative Anachronism has cancelled their meeting

Hildagard was a Shieldmaiden
The Neo-Druids gather at moonrise
The Society for Creative Anachronism has cancelled their meeting
No one speaks of the Sacred Oak Grove

The Neo-Druids gather at moonrise
Hildagard is rotting slowly on Odin's Gallows-Tree
No one speaks of the Sacred Oak Grove
The old religions are harsh

Hildagard is rotting slowly on Odin's Gallows-Tree
In a hollow log buried 10 feet underground a dreamer sleeps
The old religions are harsh
His beloved Hildagard killed him with her iron broadsword.

by Kevin Welble

Some Jobs

It was afternoon when the first post-hole digger
Came with implements, not to nurture the apple tree,
But to set holes, as was the job,
Along highways nestling through this country.
(For purposes commissioned by the state)
Isn't what we were told; nevertheless, it was evident.

As the shuddering fury of symmetrical apples was evident
In back of hunched post hole-diggers
Who were gripping implements issued by the state.
I wondered if maybe the apple tree
Didn't care that this was a post hole-digger's job.
This was apple tree country.

Signs of deliverance from another country's
Fold needn't be infinitely evident.
After all, isn't deliverance only a job
Like this business of post hole-digging?
Consider it from the indigenous viewpoint of the tree--
Having to share space with glorified states,

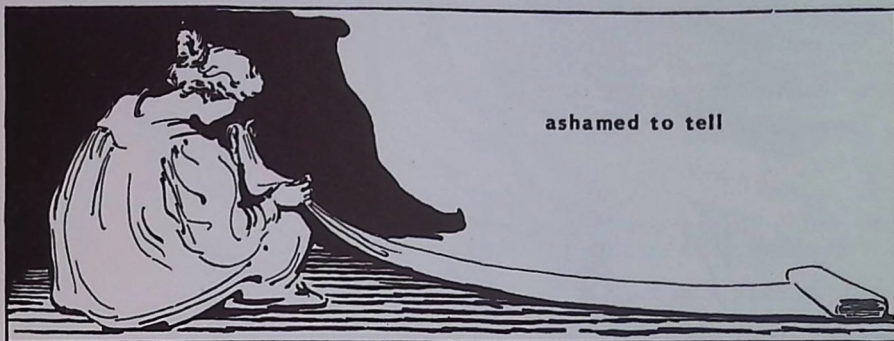
When actually the only thing to state
Is how one's money transfers from country to country,
And how the apples are sweet just falling from trees.
Consider also the accumulating evidence
Stemming, in part, from accounts of recent diggings.
One can see the hidden quality of such jobs.

As if they thought we'd take just any job
Away from trees and give it to the state.
Certainly the bulk of us aren't concerned with digging
More holes to be held in backyard countries.
Just as this isn't the only evidence
To consider. For a final conclusion, we must turn to the trees.

For a major portion of apples come from trees.
And this alone is proof that the job
Of apple bearing is the greater evidence
We need in weighing these matters of state.
Having done so, should we begin filling holes from country

To country? Because soon, if we don't, might not the diggers
Have dug the last remaining space licensed by the state?
And then will we realize it wasn't just any job?

by Linda Belford



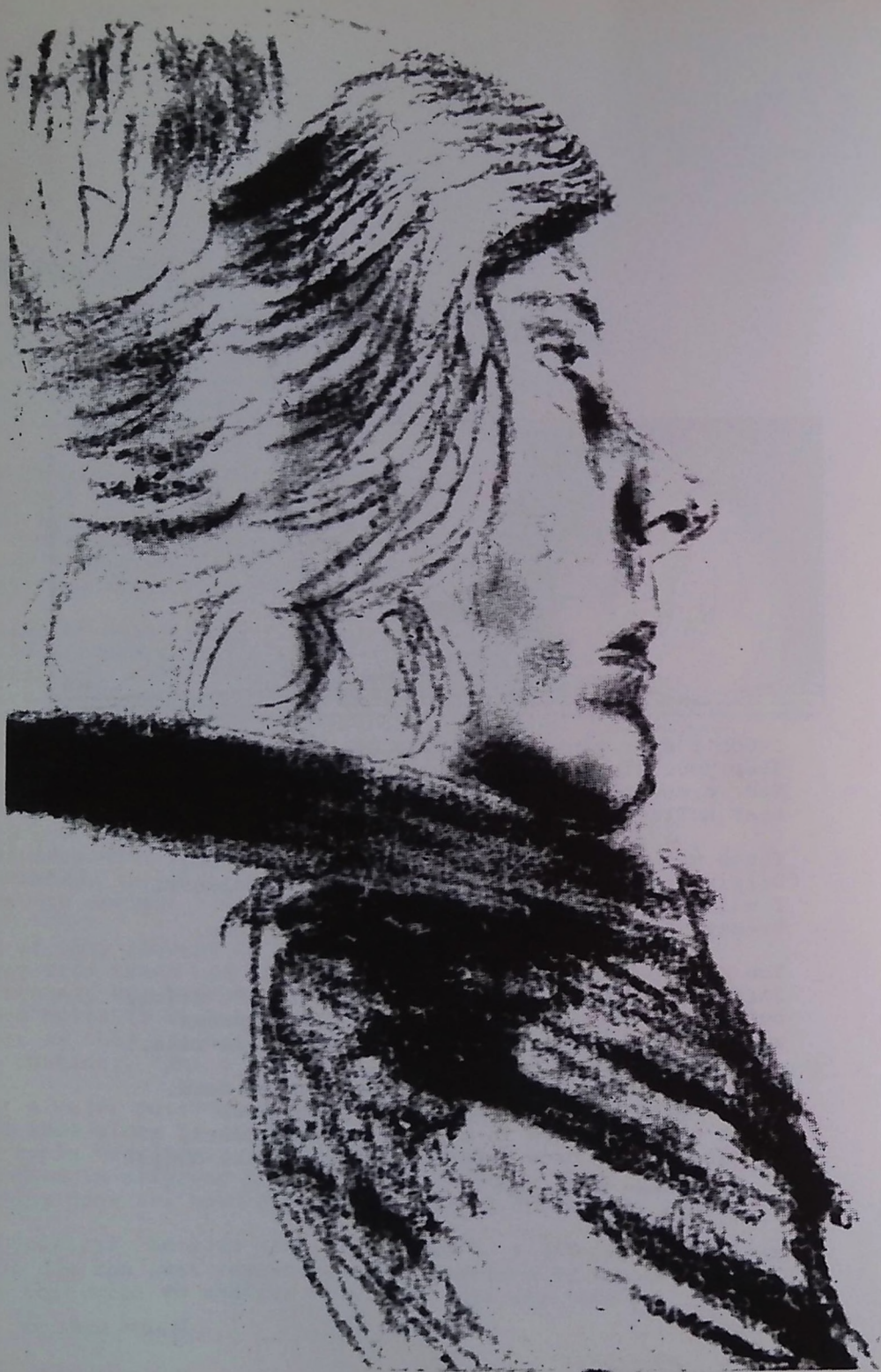
I don't ever want you to call me, Nancy.
Keep your dream struck rappings on wood to yourself.
Your presence is burdened with cold fingered teeth
that smile hello just hours before clenching.

There was a picture in your living room once;
Draping satin topped with oily cream shoulders.
I was crazy about your lit collarbones;
twenty-nine seemed too far away cloudy then.

You married a laid-back motorcycle man.
Strange, for a non-working girl who didn't drive,
but dreamt of a girl with pseudo-flu symptoms
and came knocking with news. This baby is mine.

Well, Florida's come and gone and Tom is dead.
You've probably finished unpacking by now.
Drunk pick-up crash in a lousy trailer court.
He kissed your brow before walking out the door.

by Tamera Walker Fox



by Wendy Young Adrian

Hitting Home

by Steve Givens

Joe McCrary walked slowly up the faded, cracked steps to the back door of the house. He hadn't been home in years and hadn't even faced his father since his mother's funeral two years before. Nevertheless, this was home—the house he had grown up in. Bill McCrary would be surprised to see his youngest son. He wouldn't be excited or particularly glad, just surprised. There was no love lost between them and that made it all the more difficult for Joe now.

Joe rapped on the door and a few seconds later the first of five locks began clicking open. The door opened a crack and a round, middle-aged face peered out.

"Well, I'll be damned," the voice inside said. The chain slid off the last lock and the door opened wider.

"Hi. . . Dad," Joe said.

"Well, what the hell do you want?"

"Yeah, it's good to see you, too. How've you been?" Joe continued speaking in a nice, friendly tone, purposely deaf to Bill McCrary's remark. "May I come in?"

The door opened wider and Bill McCrary turned and walked through the kitchen and into the dining room.

Joe stood in solitude in the doorway. "Thanks," he said. He could see that nothing had changed. Bill McCrary sat down at the table, his radio at his left, a stack of books to his right, a magazine open before him and the evening news blaring on the television. The funny thing was not this menagerie of media; it was that Bill McCrary took it all in without missing a word. Also, it drove Joe crazy; it always had.

Joe sat down across from his father who paid little attention to his presence. Seconds oozed past like hours. "Dad. . ." Joe hesitated and then plunged ahead, "I need to stay here for a couple of days." A siren rang out a few blocks away and Joe tensed in his seat.

Bill McCrary looked up slowly from his reading. "Don't bullshit me, boy. What the hell's going on?"

"Nothing. . . Really, I just need to get away from everything for a few days, so I decided I would come home."

"Boy, don't bullshit an old bullshitter," Bill McCrary warned. "You haven't turned up here for over five years, and there's no reason for you to turn up now. Unless. . . but no."

Something in Bill McCrary's voice changed, and Joe thought that maybe he heard his father laugh to himself. Maybe his father might understand after all. Maybe, just maybe, he could get the help he needed. He just wasn't sure yet.

"Come on, boy! I saw you jump when that siren went off. What the hell's up?"

"Nothing. . . Really!"

"Fine." Bill McCrary went back to his National Geographic.

After a few minutes of what seemed eternal silence, Joe spoke. "Actually, I'm in a bit of a mess. . . with the cops." Joe shifted in his seat and tensed as he awaited some kind of reply. Bill McCrary was not a physically violent man, but Joe still feared what his reaction might be. He remembered the last time. . .

His father looked up and fixed his eyes on his son. He then closed his magazine, turned off the radio and the television and pushed all of his books aside.

"Look, kid. You may think that I spent the last five years holding a grudge against you, but I've got better ways to spend my time." Joe looked at his father, puzzled. What was his father saying? Had he forgiven Joe for the past? Was Joe the only one who had remained sour all these years?

"Dad, I . . . I thought you were mad at me."

"You're damn right I was mad at you, I've been mad at you, but I'm not going to be mad at you anymore. It gives me ulcers. I bet you didn't know I had ulcers, did you? Ever hear of a telephone? You'd be surprised how easy they are to operate. Did you know Suzy had another kid? Your Aunt Joan died, did you know that? Your brother just put his house up for sale . . . Where are you living now . . . besides here, I mean?"

"Whoa there, we've got a lot of catching up to do." Tears filled Joe's eyes and he looked at his father with love for the first time in over five years. Regardless of what happened from now on, he felt better knowing he once again had a home. If only he had come home years ago! He started to speak his gratitude when a police car screeched to a halt in front of the house. Looking out the window, he said, "Christ!" and then to his father, "Thanks, Dad," as he rushed out the back door and sprang over the fence into the gravel alley where he had spent many hours of his childhood.

Joe ran down the right side of the alley and cut sharply to his left. He looked over his right shoulder and saw it coming. He tensed, closed his eyes, and thrust his arms out in front of him. The oblong leather ball landed gently in his outstretched arms and he kept running. "Touchdown!" he shouted. He stopped and turned around. Half of the guys behind him were jumping ecstatically and half were looking dejected. "Better luck next time, Larry," Joe said. "I guess I'm just too fast for you."

"Just go kick off you little braggert," Larry replied.

"Great catch, Joe," said Mike.

Joe came to the outlet of the alley and had to make a quick decision about which way to go. The alley ended where he stood, but he decided to keep going in the direction he was headed. He knew this old neighborhood like the back of his hand. He crossed the street that ran perpendicular with the alley and ran into the yard of a boarded-up old brick bungalow.

"Get the hell out of my yard!" Old Miss Porter stuck her head out of her back door and screamed so that all of north St. Louis could hear.

"But . . . my ball . . ." Joe stammered.

"I don't care about your ball. You kids have cut through my yard one time too many. If you want your ball back, tell your mother to come get it."

"Oh, yeah?" Joe challenged.

He heard the sirens behind him pull away from his father's house and he quickened his pace. He bounded over the fence at the back of the yard and landed on the hard, cracked pavement that was the parking lot of the North Point Apartments. At the far end of the lot was a steep drop off that Joe knew well. He came to the edge, dropped to the seat of his pants and slid down the embankment. He hit bottom quite a bit sooner than he thought he would; it wasn't nearly as steep as he remembered. Getting up, he found himself face to face with a huge, white brick wall that he knew to be the north wall of the Ansehl Perfume Company, or at least that's what it used to be.

"Over here, guys, an open window," Joe whispered. The four member of the "Knights of Sherwood Forest" paused before the window. One by one they slipped into the inner darkness of the factory.

"Now what?" Larry asked.

"I don't know, shut up and let me think a minute," Joe said. "Give me the flashlight, Mike."

"What flashlight?"

"What flashlight? The flashlight that you were supposed to bring, idiot. It was all you had to bring."

"But, but . . ."

"Can't you do anything right?"

Just as quietly as they had entered, the Knights slipped back into the night.

Joe looked to his right and saw, through the narrow corridor formed by the wall and the tree-covered embankment, a police car race by. He knew they were heading to the railroad tracks to set up a roadblock. To his left was the corner of the factory. He rounded the corner and caught a glimpse of the shiny metal ladder leading to the roof. He had hoped it would still be there. He climbed it quickly and looked back just in time to see a cop coming through Miss Porter's backyard. "Shit." He reached the top and lay prostrated on the rough tar and gravel roof.

Up on the roof of the Ansehl Perfume Company, Joe and Mike paused. "Well, Mike, our first successful job; it's a good thing you remembered the flashlight this time," Joe joked. "All we have to do is to lay low here for a while 'til the cops give up, and then we can sneak home. I told my mom and dad I was spending the night at your house."

"And I told my mom I was spending the night at yours."

"Great! We'll get down in a while and go sleep in the rafters of my garage and get up in the morning like nothing happened."

"Yeah, and then we can go over to Sell's Store and listen to him tell us all about the hoodlums that broke into his store," Mike added.

Joe crawled on his belly from one end of the roof to the other, afraid of raising his head even a bit. He knew that there was only one other ladder, and it led to the loading dock right by the railroad tracks. As he crawled, he became conscious of a low rumble. He could not figure out what the sound was until he looked up and saw a thin column of white smoke. "The train!" If only he could get to the other side, down the ladder, and onto the train before the cops saw him, he would be a free man. He crawled to the edge of the building where the ladder led down to the concrete dock. Here, Joe paused for a moment, thinking back on his encounter with his father and smiled. He started slowly down the ladder.

It was nearly 1:30 before Joe and Mike heard all the police cars pull away and felt it was safe enough to head back to Joe's garage. They started slowly down the ladder and looked cautiously around before starting out across the parking lot and jumping into Miss Porter's yard.

"I hope the old bitch isn't up," said Mike.

They came to the front of her house and were met by Miss Porter and two men that, although dressed in suitcoats, looked suspiciously like policemen.

"That's them, officer. That's the two I saw running out of Sell's. They always cut through my yard, too, put that in your report."

Joe felt sick. The police officers began walking toward him and his legs gave out and he collapsed. "What am I going to tell my father? He will never, never forgive me."

Half way down the ladder he heard the shot. "Freeze, McCrary!"

Joe didn't think twice as he scurried back up the ladder. Another shot rang out. It hit home.

Alison Got the Last One

Alison was first to sit on Aunt Hattie's knee,
'cause I was five and she was only three.
And when she hopped down, she shouted with glee...
Oh look, Aunt Hattie gave me some candy!"
Then I was lifted to that lofty perch.
Aunt Hattie smiled at me, then opened her purse.
She reached in her hand and started to search....
and search, and search, and search, and search.
Finally she turned that purse inside out,
and I felt tears well in my eyes and my lips begin to pout.
As I realized, beyond a doubt,
that her search was all in vain, and no amount of searching could
produce my candy cane.....
Alison got the last one.

Alison grew up beautiful and thin. She was Pom Pom Queen and
had lots of friends.
She got married to a wonderful guy.
Tom was rich and famous, and Alison was the "apple of his eye"
They honeymooned in Rio and the South of France,
while my life was completely devoid of romance.
And mother constantly said, "If you get the chance, you should
marry a man just like Tom."
Well, I wanted to, but there were none left,
Alison got the last one.

Alison and Tom were part of the jetset,
and they loved telling stories of the people they met.
They spent winter on Cyprus with Jackie and Ari,
and summers in Monaco with Grace and Rainier.
While I stayed home in Connecticut,
and watched my life waste away,
taking care of mother day after day, after day, after day.
Then one day mother got deathly sick.
I sent a telegram to Alison saying: Ali come quick. The end is near
She's fading fast. All hope gone, she can't possibly last.
Mother was almost comatose by the time Alison arrived.
But the moment she saw Alison she revitalized
Her eyes began to sparkle, and the color returned to her cheeks.
She held Alison so close, and tried desperately to speak.
But Death was impatiently waiting by her side.
So she gave Alison a long, tender kiss,
breathed a sigh, and then died.
And I stood there watching it all, calm as could be.
I had devoted my life to Mother,
but there was no goodbye kiss for me.....
Alison got the last one.

Alison cried her eyes out the night Mother died.
But I had none left; mine had all dried.
So I went down stairs to pour myself a big stiff drink.
I needed time alone, time to think.
But the thoughts I had were unpleasant, and bad.
They upset me terribly, and made me mad.
So I drank some more, this time to forget,

and that's when I heard a voice say,
"psst.....Let's play Russian Roulette." - It said it was
time that I let God decide whether I would go on living
or die by suicide.
Well, the idea intrigued me,
so I got the gun. The chamber held six bullets, but I
only put in one.
Then I closed the chamber and gave it spin, and when it
stopped I spun it again and again and again and again.
I put the barrel to my head, and gave the trigger a squeeze....
But there was no bang,
only a click, click, click, click click.
I pulled that trigger five times,
and five times I survived.

I finally won!!!
Thank God, I'm alive!!
Then the voice spoke again.....
Yes God, I understand, let your will be done.
I held the gun tightly in my hand.
I went into the hallway,
to the bottom of the stairs.

Then I called out sweetly,
"Oooh Alison,
please come here...."
ALISON GOT THE LAST ONE.

by Ms. Johnnie M. Light

Picture Yourself

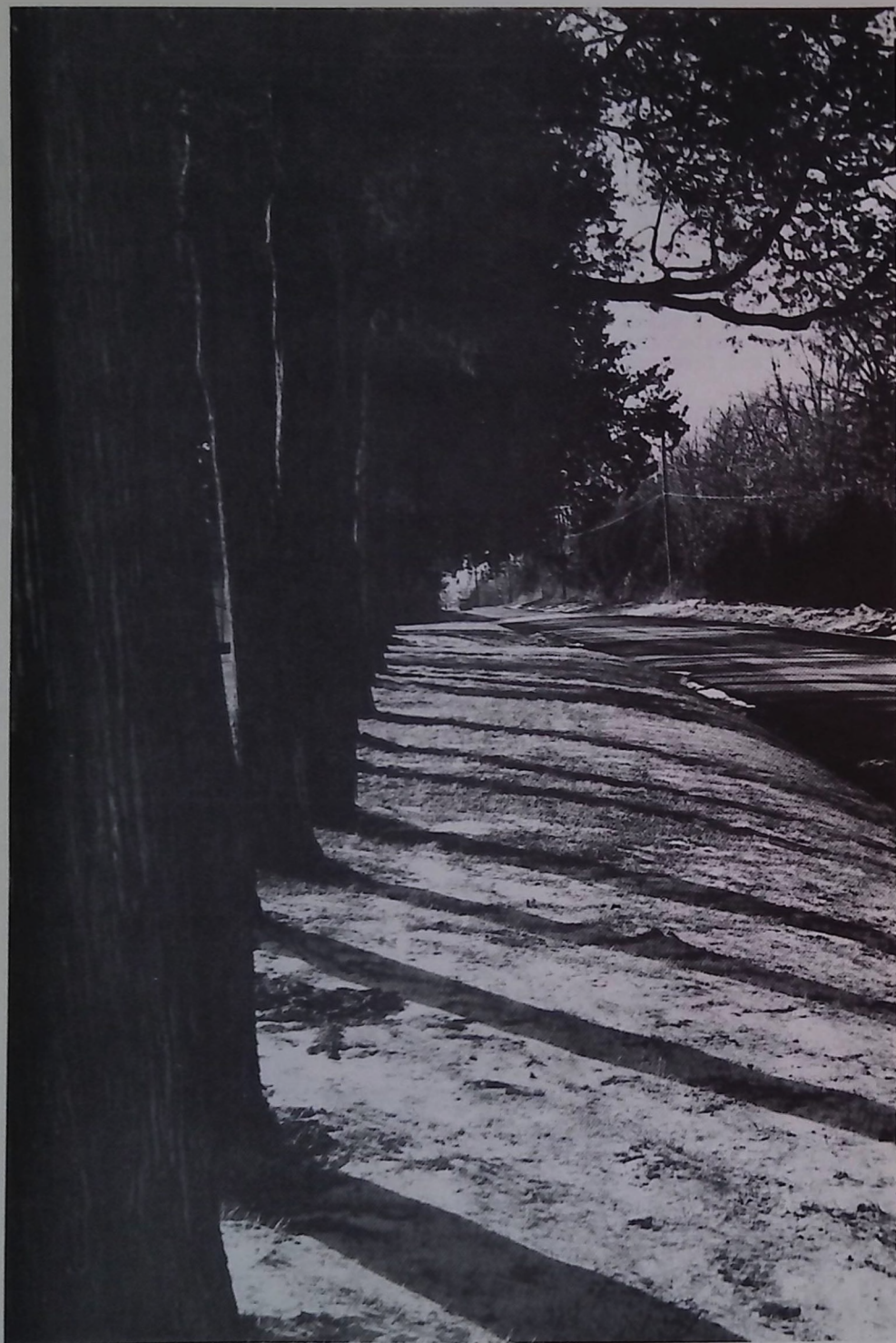
What's that
Floating at the top of your cup?
There it is
Again.
See it.
It looks horrible.
You better get it out.
Don't wait too long.
I knew someone
Who choked.
He thought it was nothing.
Didn't pay
Any attention at all.
Oh
He's alright now
But whenever
The wind blows
Or if
The trees bend
He holds on
To the screendoor.

by Michael Klein

TEST OF BRAVERY

When I was six
and the house
was quiet, dark
and still
I sat up alone
to work on
my bravery.
I slid my foot
out from the warmth
of blankets piled high
till it hung
skinny and shaking
out over the edge
of the bed
down to the floor
even tho I knew
it was crawling
with spiders and snakes
in green slime
that could suck you
right down out of bed
and into hell forever.

by Jeanne Kerans



by Mary Lu Zinser

Perspectives on Overnight Success

On the road to Grand Rapids, Michigan
Driving all night, in the rain;
What the hell am I doing here?

My car is acting up again; too bad, because
I can't tell a crankcase from a suitcase
and I've seen a lot of suitcases.
I'm not surprised; I read somewhere
that it's unnatural for a musician
to be mechanically inclined... I think
it has something to do with the musical brain.
I figure I must have a screw loose
Somewhere -- otherwise, why would I be doing this?

I roll my window down, and turn on the hockey game.
I hate hockey, but somehow the phrase, "St. Louis Blues"
Applies tonight. The air on my face feels like a cold,
wet sponge; the goalkeeper lost another tooth.
I find myself wondering if hockey, and inhaling water,
are really preferable to driving with my eyes closed.
I know my mind is wandering; Chip should take over
but he's having such a good dream back there
among the mike stands and the Big Mac sandwich cartons
I hate to wake him up.

I dream, too, but mine are waking dreams. I dream
there is a record exec disguised as a hammer salesman
At a hardware convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
He wants me to hop a flight to L.A.,
cut a great record,
and sit around in a big mansion
Waiting for it to go platinum.

I say, "Sure -- but what about these poor slobs?
They paid to hear my music."

"But this is your BIG CHANCE!
(He spits all over me in his indignation.)
Don't you get it? I want to make you a STAR.
New name, new clothes, new identity --
the WORKS."

I say, "What about old names, old clothes, and
good old ME?" I start to sweat.

Suddenly, I am a hockey puck, sailing over ice
toward a brick wall, or maybe toward a rendezvous
with the goalkeeper's mouth.
Either way, I'm doomed.

I've gone five miles since I last looked at the road.
Chip is nudging my shoulder; I realize
he's been talking for ten minutes
without getting any answers.
A cold sweat runs down my back.

Then I see the beginnings of a grin reflected
back at me from my windshield. The feeling grows
until laughter bursts forth, like the water
from underneath my radiator cap.

Chip says, "What's with you?"

I say, "I dunno. I guess I'm just anxious
to get to Grand Rapids."

by Susan Adrian

POETRY CLASS

by June Mauritzen

Be careful with information you get from Mondays' materials class.
Watch out for words like yellow, scarves and Yugoslavia.
Beware! They'll betray you-hold you hostage.
Swinging pistols from their hips,
They'll wake you up at midnight
To make you write songs at gunpoint in dingy pajamas,
Under one-third of a three-way bulb without a coffeepot.

Standing Against the Change

"LIGHT A SINGLE CANDLE
CURSE NOT THE DARKNESS"
This I have been told

Always I find myself
Fighting against the current
And running against the wind

I draw my lines carefully
And hold them well
I keep the faith

I stand against the change
Not letting what is good
slip between my fingers

Sometimes I wonder though
as others destroy what they were
Why am I still here

Sometimes, trying to keep something right
I curse the darkness
When the candle will not light

You have seen me in my youth
Face towards the storm
And hold back the winds

But most grow old
Strong oaks become bending reeds
They move with the current

I , however, still struggle as I have
Trying to make the stars stand still
Forcing dusk not to fall

And you may still find me
Standing in the sea
Shouting at the tide

by Terry Sofian

LIBERTY

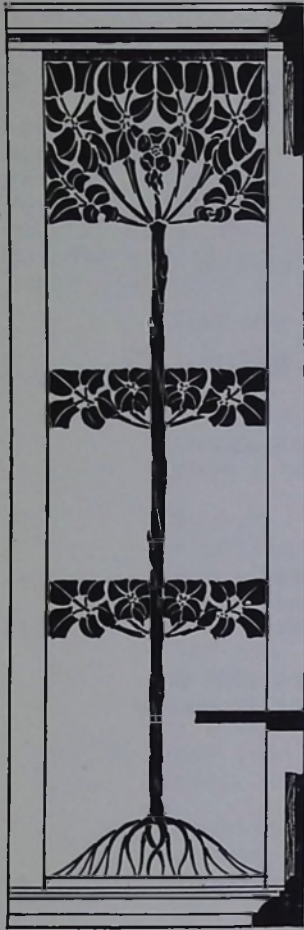
I want you to hear me
I saw the photograph of you in the parlor
Heard the music, watched the dust.
Thought about you and how you said you felt.
You must not say how it is you feel.
There is no reason for us to know.
In the sincerity of your hands,
Honesty in the stare,
This is all only what I want you to see;
Suddenly born
Wake up on the funeral of thoughts
And start to sing.
I mean really how many
People do you think will want to read
That all these years ago you were sensitive
And sad. We have more in our fingers
Than we can ever write anyway.
We will never say it and I trust you not to.
The pain is our pain and the same as tomorrow
So unimportant as the sidewalk.
I speak the we of those who will
And all we want to hear from you
Is how things looked, give just this
And we will tell you History
Is ours, how it felt
For you to be there and live at that time.

by Teddy Ficklen

Poison Flower

Firefly soars in treetops
Dodging dewdrops
Air shivers
When misty veil falls
On a blackened land
Lonely man cries
His tears smoking on hard,
Bare earth
But no one sees his misery
That like an evil seed takes root
Flowers
And comes to bear
Bitter, rotten fruit.

by Kevin Weible



The Tree that Spiralled into the Stars

by John Dalton

It was on cool spring mornings that the magic worked the best. When the early morning mist wound through the tree like dragon's breath and the smells of the Earth could send a 10 year old boy time-tripping into the past. When the dew clung tight to the grass like the fine, sparkling dust of a wizard. And time could dissipate into thin air.

It was on mornings like these that Kevin would wake early, dress himself, eat a quick breakfast of Sugar Pops and wander into the field which lay just beyond his back porch. Soon his best pair of Puma tennis shoes were soaked from the wet grass and his glasses began to mist from the humidity.

And then there was the tree, large and sturdy with branches that spiraled into the morning sky. It was a mulberry tree with a trunk as thick as the table in Kevin's kitchen. It towered above the other trees, casting its tangled shadow across the field.

He peeled off his windbreaker and hung it neatly on a small stub which protruded from the trunk, like a business man hanging up his sports jacket before entering the office. The smooth bark of the mulberry tree felt good under the hands of the 10 year old. He ascended the tree with ease, having unconsciously memorized every hand and foot hold.

Magic covered the tree. It surrounded and sealed every limb, every branch and twig, every leaf. It covered the tree like a protective paint which could withstand the harshest weather, the most ferocious attack, the longest duration of time.

Halfway up the tree was a platform constructed of two-by-fours and plywood. It wound through the mid-section of the tree, occasionally opening to permit an unruly branch. Along the perimeter of the platform ran a thick rail which supported various dials and knobs Kevin had collected from the local dump.

Hanging from a limb was a rusted medicine cabinet (also courtesy of the dump) which held a collection of deadly wooden weapons. At the center of the platform was a small metal seat, the captain's chair. A cardboard box at the base of the chair held maps of the universe as well as the captain's log.

Kevin flipped through the notebook filled with his own handwriting stopping at the first blank page. He wrote, "Today begins exploration of the planet Serith. I expect trouble with a rebel band of androids who are stationed on the planet." He replaced the notebook in the box and then withdrew several maps in order to pinpoint the exact location of Serith.

Once the preparatory work was done he stepped over to the rail and flipped the largest knob (one he had pried off a junked washing machine) to permanent press wash. Immediately he heard the familiar rumbling of the two main engines kicking in. The starship lifted slowly at first giving Kevin a pleasant view of his neighborhood. He surveyed the ever-expanding subdivisions which pressed their boundaries into the countryside inching closer and closer and closer to his own back yard. He saw the shingled roof of his house, saw the vinyl top of his father's Ford Granada, saw his own world from the different and strange view that so many birds take for granted.

For a moment he hovered over a group of boys burdened with bat, gloves and baseballs. Kevin knew all five of the boys, one of them, Bob Calder, used to ride with him in the starship. But Bob had been clumsy with the delicate

controls of the ship. Once Kevin had caught him firing a laser when the starship was doing light speed. It had taken Kevin nearly an hour to explain to Bob that what he had done was impossible.

Kevin allowed the ship to follow the boys. His hand reached for a weapon. The pulsar gun could emit a white hot fireball which exploded on impact. The boys would never know what hit them. It would end their cruel jokes and his alienation. Kevin paused with his finger on the trigger, imagining what their bodies would look like when the police found them.

Kevin experienced a shudder of self-revulsion. The captain's manual clearly outlawed an unprovoked attack. For a second right and wrong had come together and clouded his thinking.

He hit the ship's main thrust control and the neighborhood, the city, the earth disappeared in the blink of an eye as the starship jumped to light speed. The accumulating g's pressed him tight against his seat.

The g's did not affect the birds; for they continued to dive among the branches uninterrupted.

Kate Nelgin heard the shower go on, heard the grunt from her husband as the cold water stung his body, heard the silence coming from her son's room. She pushed open Kevin's door expecting the small, blond haired boy fumbling for his glasses, knowing all along his room was empty.

Kate leaned against the doorway and gazed at the books which lined Kevin's shelves. She had opened "Asimov's Encyclopedia of Science and Technology" once but had become lost in the scientific riff-raff. And then there was the fiction, books by unheard-of authors like John W. Campbell, Henry Kuttner and Edmund Hamilton. Who were these men and what strange ideas were they putting in her son's head? Kevin's library was constantly growing. He meticulously saved his allowance and money he earned cutting lawns and would then plead with Kate to take him to a second hand bookstore where he could spend it.

Kate pulled her robe tight around her and descended the stairs to the kitchen. She had just finished scrambling the eggs when Dan Nelgin walked into the kitchen and asked, "Where's Kevin?"

"In his treehouse I guess."

"Doing what?"

"Playing gyro captain or whatever it is he does up there."

"Why doesn't he play baseball like all the other kids?"

"I don't know," she said and the words lingered in her mind. After 32 years of living, 12 of those years married, there was a lot she simply did not know. She did not know why, on dull afternoons when the house was empty, she took long, hot baths and dreamed of making love to old boyfriends or nameless acquaintances who caught her eye. She felt a dangerous undertow at the bottom of her fantasies. She wondered if it was the same for Kevin.

Dan Nelgin finished his breakfast, turned and looked out of the picture window at the tree which stood just beyond the imaginary line marking the end of his property. For a moment he thought he saw his son moving between the branches, but the sun broke his gaze.

He was an orderly, practical man, and the problem with Kevin would weigh heavily upon his mind. There was a distance between him and his son he had never felt before. When the two of them were alone there was an icy solemnness about the boy which vanished when Kate was present. He and his son seemed to have nothing in common, nothing to talk about, no dreams to share.

Dan Nelgin said goodbye to his wife, walked to his car and tossed his briefcase through the open car window. He paused for a moment, once again looking back at the tree. He thought of taking 10 minutes and walking back to the tree to talk to Kevin. But what could he say when the large brown eyes of the 10 year old were upon him? "Grow up Kevin. The game is over and it's time to grow up." He slid beneath the steering wheel and started up the engine. He would not talk to his son, he did not know what to say.

The sun was hot on Kevin's back. He had removed his shirt when he landed

on the dry, desert planet Serith. A nearby star had gone supernova, causing the once lush rainforest to turn to an endless pattern of cracked bedrock. He was crouched behind his starship, laser gun in hand, waiting to do battle with the androids that ruled the planet, when he was so rudely interrupted.

Kate had brought him lunch.

Kevin stepped out from behind the tree, letting his wooden gun fall to the ground. He moved toward his mother awkwardly with his eyes to the ground.

She felt as if she had caught him masturbating behind the tree.

"Thanks Mom."

She nodded in recognition of his uneasy words, smiled and left him standing before his treehouse.

He ate lunch seated in the captain's chair. A warm breeze carried the sound of approaching bulldozers.

An uneasy week passed as Kevin and his mother adjusted to the changing routine now that school was out. There were worried glances exchanged between Kate and Dan when their son came in for dinner after playing in his tree all day. But for the most part, the problem had subsided.

It was on a muggy, overcast morning that Kevin found the orange survey tag nailed in the tree. He pulled it off, feeling as if a stranger had rummaged through his most private possessions.

Dirk Conners was less than 10 feet away from the large mulberry tree before he noticed the wooden platform and the boy on top of it. He lifted his handkerchief and wiped his balding head with a handkerchief.

"Okay boy, you run along home now. I've got work to do here."

"No." The reply was simple and straight to the point.

"Now I'm going to blow this tree and I'd hate to see you get hurt when she falls." Dirk looked up at Kevin and waited for an answer. The boy quickly moved out of his view, but was back in two seconds pointing a wooden gun at his head.

"You touch my tree and I'll blow you to pieces."

Dirk Conners looked around hoping to spot a supervisor. He could not find one. "Jesus Christ. All right kid, tell me where I can find your mother."

Kate Nelgin was doing the dishes when Dirk Conners came to the door. The problem was discussed, some alternatives were suggested, no solution was reached.

Dan Nelgin came home from work and met his wife and Dirk Conners in front of the tree. Dirk held a series of landscaping layouts which showed a concrete drainage ditch where the tree now stood.

"Look, this tree means a lot to my son. Is there some way you could build around it?"

"Not a chance."

Dan Nelgin looked at his son who was sitting patiently atop the treehouse. He had tried, but the powers that be were simply too strong for him and his son. And then there was the part of him that wanted the tree to fall, without a doubt it would force Kevin back into the world of real 10 year olds. It almost seemed to Dan as if the problem were begging to solve itself.

He stepped close to the tree and spoke to his son. "Come on down Kevin. There's nothing we can do."

The boy resisted for several minutes in which Dan saw a smirk spread across the construction worker's face.

Finally the resistance ended. Kevin had reached a decision. He climbed out of the tree and into his father's open arms.

"They won't knock it over. It's too powerful," he said to his father as if including him in a great secret.

The first charge of dynamite barely shook the tree. Kevin wore a triumphant smile. The second charge exposed the roots and caused the tree to lurch a foot to the right.

Then the bulldozers moved in. They charged the trunk again and again with metal plows that tore the bark from the tree. Kate counted 15 separate blows from the bulldozers before it fell.

Dan Nelgin saw the look on his son's face when the tree fell. If he had been allowed to go back in time once in his life, he would have gone back and

slipped the construction worker a pair of \$50 bills and told him there was a way to build around the tree. Many years would pass before Dan could remember the look on his son's face and not feel stinging guilt.

In a second Kevin was racing across the field. Kate made a half-hearted attempt at catching him and failed. Dan and Kate Nelgin did not see their son again until dinner time.

The back door opened and Kevin stood before them. His face was pale and his eyes were red from crying. There was a deep depressing look to him which reminded Kate of the solemn faces of old men she helped care for at the nursing home.

"What's wrong Kevin?" she asked, knowing the answer all along but wanting him to release some emotions.

"It wasn't real, it never will be," the boy said amidst a deep sigh.

"What's not real?" she said and threw a worried glance at her husband.

His small hands opened in an adult gesture, trying to form words out of air. "The starship, the androids, the dragons, the magic, the-" He stopped in mid-sentence knowing he could never convey the thought and emotion. If he were older he might have compared it to the yearn of a prisoner for freedom or the emptiness resulting from unreturned love. But he was a child with an ache deep in the back of his throat caused by emotions he had never known before.

And what do you tell a 10 year old suffering from premature broken dreams?

Dan and Kate Nelgin did not know.

But the words spilled out from Dan's lips, he did not know where they came from.

"You could always play baseball."

Background

You might remember we've met in bars
under bright lights over pool tables.
It doesn't matter to me
whether you remember or not.

You in Calvin Kleins
black shirt, white tie
ever so butch beading the eight ball,
My inexperience hovering over the cue tip
waiting for the event to happen.

Slowly girls grow into women.
There's no going back.
There was no back in the bar.
There never was with you.

Go ahead and sink the eight ball.
It doesn't matter to me
whether you win or not.
There are places to go
where the lights aren't so scalding.

by Linda Belford

form

You too wanted your life to have form,
such a form as would distinguish you from others.
So you carried yourself to the coast,
first in your thoughts.

You noticed how these things always start off inside.
One time they tried telling you
these things you see are not real.
You tried in vain whipping their faces,

so much of it made up.
Finally you had to leave.
It was only proof,
you are one of them but not with them.

Once, you thought the world had disconnected.
People were in different places
without a way to communicate.
Then you sat in a room full of people

Who would not speak or look at one another.
You remembered the time your father took you fishing
and you caught nothing all evening.
These are not isolated events.

These have a history.
They never told you
you couldn't be a vegetarian.
They only went on

cooking their Italian Sausages at six o'clock.
You sat for mashed potatoes and corn,
the light was yellow and warm.
What if you'd never gone to the auditorium?

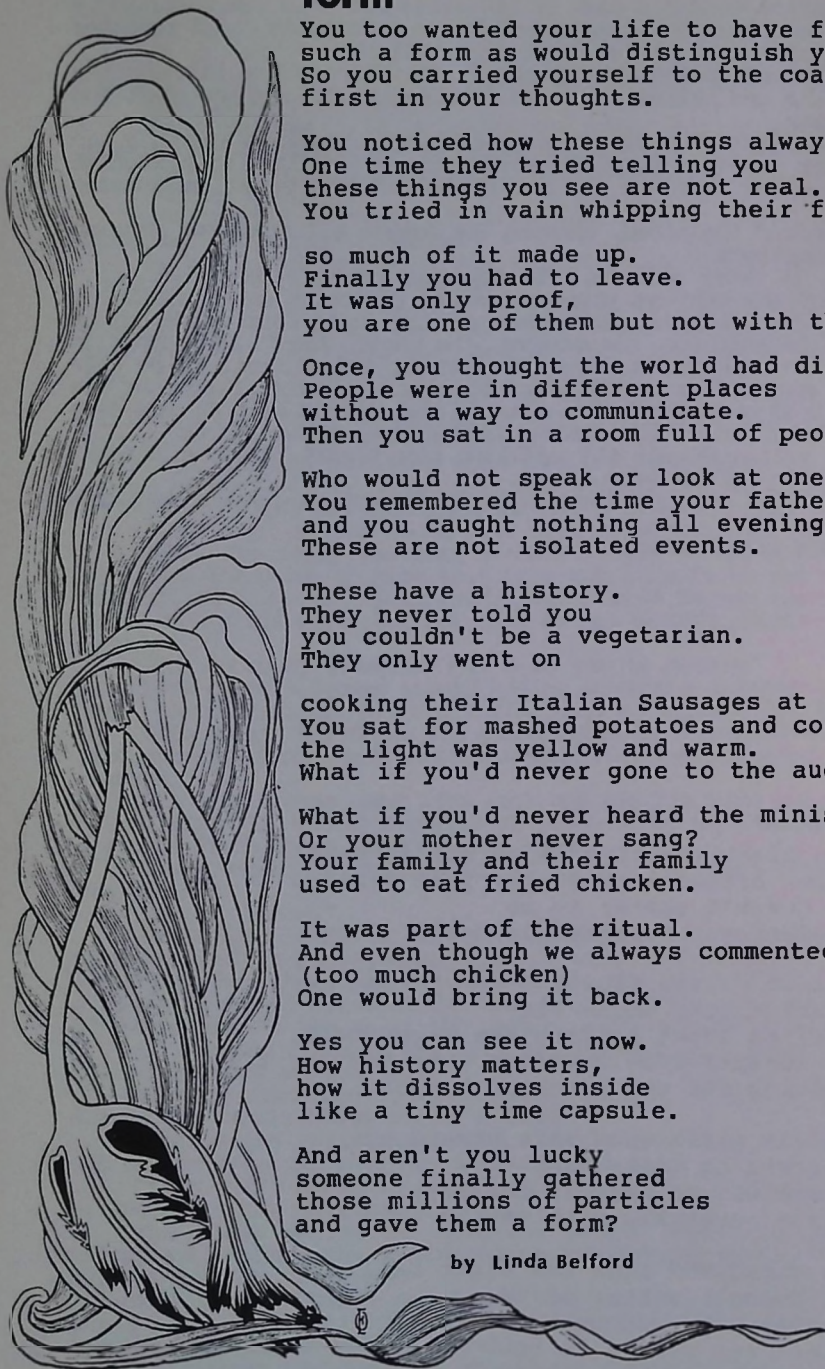
What if you'd never heard the minister?
Or your mother never sang?
Your family and their family
used to eat fried chicken.

It was part of the ritual.
And even though we always commented,
(too much chicken)
One would bring it back.

Yes you can see it now.
How history matters,
how it dissolves inside
like a tiny time capsule.

And aren't you lucky
someone finally gathered
those millions of particles
and gave them a form?

by Linda Belford





by Paul R. Wilson

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